

ATSDR MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT

ATSDR Issues Public Health Assessment on Plutonium 239 Sludge from
the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory Site in Livermore,
Calif.

Finding is No Apparent Public Health Hazard

For Immediate Release: Oct. 2, 2003

ATLANTA - The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), a public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has released a final public health assessment (PHA) that investigated exposure and radiological doses associated with plutonium sludge (Pu 239). The finding is no apparent public health hazard.

Pu 239 from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) site historically was released to the Livermore Water Reclamation Plant. Also, plutonium-contaminated sludge historically was distributed to the Livermore community for use as a soil amendment and may still be present at some locations.

Based on ATSDR's evaluation of available data and current knowledge of radiation health effects, the following conclusions are presented in the public health assessment:

Pu 239 from the site was released to the Livermore sewer system, which contaminated the Livermore Water Reclamation Plant (LWRP) sludge that might have been distributed to the Livermore community. The contamination resulted in above background soil concentrations of Pu 239.

Using health protective exposure assumptions, the radiological doses from maximum concentrations of distributed sludge are below levels of health concern.

The finding of No Apparent Public Health Hazard means that the radiation concentrations were below levels that would result in illness for people who might come in contact with the soil. ATSDR recommends continued monitoring of Pu 239 concentrations and other contaminants at the LLNL site and the LWRP sewage treatment system.

The public health assessment is available for public review at the following repositories in Livermore:

The Livermore Public Library
1000 South Livermore Ave.

The Lawrence Livermore National Lab Discovery (L-797)
7000 East Ave.

Community members seeking information on the procedures or the content of the public health consultation may contact Mark Evans, geologist, toll free at 1-888-422-8737, or Regional Representative Bill Nelson may be contacted in California at 415-947-4316. Callers should refer to the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory site in Livermore, Calif.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, ATSDR, a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, evaluates the human health effects of exposure to hazardous substances. Established by Congress in 1980 under the Superfund law, ATSDR conducts public health assessments at each of the sites on the EPA National Priorities List, as well as other sites when petitioned. Headquartered in Atlanta, ATSDR is staffed by more than 400 health professionals including epidemiologists, physicians, toxicologists, engineers and public health educators.

####

Members of the news media may request an interview with ATSDR staff by calling Elaine McEachern or Jennifer Sarginson in the ATSDR Office of Policy and External Affairs at 404-498-0070.

[Back to ATSDR Home page](#)

Updated by R. Searfoss October 2, 2003
For more information, contact ATSDR at:
1-888-422-8737 or e-mail: atsdric@cdc.gov (public inquiries)
404-498-0080 or e-mail: atsdrmediainquires@cdc.gov (news media)

[ATSDR Home](#) | [Search](#) | [Index](#) | [Glossary](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[About ATSDR](#) | [News Archive](#) | [ToxFAQs](#) | [HazDat](#) | [Public Health Assessments](#)
[Privacy Policy](#) | [External Links Disclaimer](#) | [Accessibility](#)
US Department of Health and Human Services